



EARLY CHILDHOOD

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ready B5 Recap

March 2023



DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

03 Message From Our Leaders

04 Early Childhood Goals

05 Feature Story: Commonwealth of Virginia awarded \$4 Million
2023 Preschool Development Birth Through Five Planning Grant

06 Spotlight: Erin Carroll, Executive Director, Division of Early
Childhood Care and Education

06 Staff | Provider Acknowledgments

07 Ready Region Spotlight: Chesapeake Bay

08 Reflections

10 Focus on Wellness

Message From Our Leaders

Welcome to Spring! Each year the change in season provides us the opportunity to reflect both on all the extraordinary work that has taken place so far while also planning for the school year ahead. Here at the VDOE, we have been focused on VQB5. We continue to be amazed by the local coordination and statewide participation in Practice Year 2. This year, over 70% of Virginia's publicly funded sites are participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2. This spring, teachers from 7,000+ classrooms will receive feedback on teacher-child interactions in their classrooms. These numbers reflect a huge amount of time and effort from Ready Regions and participating sites, we are so appreciative of those efforts.

We are at an important milestone for VQB5. This month, the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) endorsed the Proposed VQB5 Guidelines for 2023-2024. Early childhood representatives from across the state met for three hours to discuss the proposed guidelines, ask questions and share their own experiences with VQB5.

From here, the VDOE will present the guidelines to the Virginia Board of Education for first review in April. Ultimately, the VDOE hopes to have full approval by June so that we can spend the summer helping prepare you for the fall, when all publicly funded providers will be required by law to participate in VQB5.

The 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines reflect what we have learned from multiple years of piloting and practice. Along the way, your feedback has helped us build a system that ensures teachers and program leaders understand their strengths and are supported to improve.

What's ahead? For those who have participated in Practice year 1 or Practice year 2 for VQB5, you will notice that the focus on teacher-child interactions and optional use of quality curriculum remains the same. Now we just need to involve every publicly-funded program. Ready Regions will engage every publicly-funded program who is required to participate, supporting them to continually improve the quality of care and education so that all children have the opportunity to enter school ready.

The 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines also provide more information about observation requirements, quality curriculum options and improvement supports. There's a detailed timeline for the development of the new VQB5 quality profiles, including plans to engage families, stakeholders and practitioners. To learn more, VDOE is hosting a two-part webinar. You can find the recording for webinar 1 [here](#), and you can register for webinar 2, which will be held on April 21, [here](#).

As always, we want to hear from you. Let us know what you think and please stay up-to-date by subscribing to our weekly newsletter, Readiness Connections and staying in touch with your local Ready Region.





Early Childhood Goals

ACCESS AND CHOICE

Expand accessibility of quality public and private early care and education to reach vulnerable children, ensure all families have quality choices and better prepare Virginia's future workforce.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Increase the capacity of early care and education providers to engage and support families to foster children's healthy development, learning, and well-being towards school readiness.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Improve child outcomes by supporting continuous improvement of teacher-child interactions and use of curriculum in all classrooms/settings.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Partner with providers to keep all children in care healthy and safe.

REGIONAL CAPACITY AND INNOVATION

Establish regional infrastructure supported by strong statewide data systems to coordinate across all settings, address unique community needs and ensure opportunity for all children statewide.



Commonwealth of Virginia awarded \$4 million 2023 Preschool Development Birth through Five Planning Grant



The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) closed out the 2022 calendar year with some very exciting news! In late December, the VDOE was notified that the Commonwealth had been awarded a \$4 million 2023 Preschool Development Birth through Five Planning Grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families. This one year planning grant will support innovations that address gaps in the early child care and education system for children ages birth to five. The grant will support the continuation of several ongoing initiatives, as well as some expansion activities in the area of child care workforce and family engagement.

This is the fourth Preschool Development Grant (PDG) that the Virginia Department of Education has received. Through the Preschool Development Planning Grant, the VDOE will continue working in partnership with key stakeholders to strengthen Virginia's early childhood systems, as well as test new and innovative strategies at the regional level.

One key priority for the Preschool Development Planning Grant will be to update the [2019 Needs Assessment](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). These two essential documents were developed at the initiation of Virginia's prior Preschool Development Grant, and set the foundation for much of the important work that has taken place across the Commonwealth since. Now, four years into the unification effort, Virginia will have the opportunity to work with regional partners to assess current needs and update goals for the years ahead. Stay tuned into your [Ready Region](#) and upcoming [Readiness Connections](#) on ways you can contribute to these important plans.

The new Preschool Development Planning Grant will also be essential to providing additional educator supports – providing both an expansion of the [Fast Track Initiative](#), and supporting ongoing surveys of the early childhood workforce, which are essential to informing policy and supports from the VDOE. Similar to prior Preschool Development Grants, this project will focus on incorporating family voice. The grant will support new family innovation grants for Ready Regions to explore new regional strategies, and support the development of a family-friendly website and materials to support engagement and understanding of [VQB5](#).

The VDOE looks forward to the opportunities the Preschool Development Grant will support in the year ahead, and will be seeking ways to engage and share updates with key stakeholders like you. Please stay connected to us through the weekly [Readiness Connections](#) for up-to-date opportunities, and as always, feel free to reach out!

Spotlight On



Erin Carroll

Executive Director, Division of Early Childhood Care and Education

Erin Carroll joined the Virginia Department of Education in February 2019, as part of the then newly formed Division of School Readiness. A lot has changed in Virginia's early childhood system since then, including the name of the Division (now the Division of Early Childhood Care and Education!), and Erin has enjoyed being a part of this work as the Executive Director of Early Childhood. In her role,

Erin coordinates with all of the offices within the Division of Early Childhood Care and Education, with a particular focus on providing support for the Office of Early Childhood Quality and Workforce, Office of Early Childhood Learning, and Office of Early Childhood Operations. One of the best parts of this role has been the opportunity to work closely with so many amazing early childhood leaders – both at the VDOE and other partners – all of whom are dedicated to improving access and quality for Virginia's youngest learners.

Prior to joining the VDOE, Erin spent nearly five years at the Louisiana Department of Education, where her work focused on statewide efforts to support the early childhood workforce and classroom quality for birth-to-five programs. Her passion has always been with the early childhood field, working as a pre-K classroom teacher and second grade teacher in San Antonio, Texas for several years as her first job post-college. Teaching in an early learning setting was incredibly impactful for Erin, and strengthened her interest in working in the early education space long term.

Erin spent most of her childhood in Blacksburg, Virginia, though her family has now been at home in central Pennsylvania for 20 years. She attended Penn State University for her bachelor's degree in Sociology, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education for a master's in Education Policy and Management. Erin and her husband are incredibly excited to welcome a baby girl to their family in May - one more young Virginian learner to plan for!

Staff | Provider Acknowledgments

The VDOE Division of Early Childhood Care and Education includes six key offices that together support the agency's goal to support birth-to-five programs in the state. These offices include:

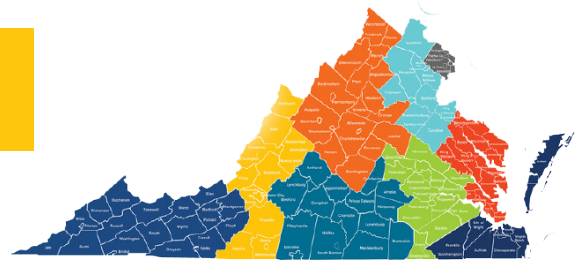
- Office of Child Care Health and Safety
- Office of Access and Enrollment
- Office of Classroom Learning
- Office of Head Start Collaboration
- Office of Operations
- Office of Quality and Workforce



This quarter, we were pleased to welcome the following new members to our team:

Beth Velke, Licensing Inspector (Northern); **Pam Smith**, Training and Support Consultant; **Chatell Callis**, Program Support Technician; **Jimmy Marcum**, Licensing Administrator (Western), **Mark Allen**, PDG Project Manager; **Katie Wolfert**, PreK Analyst and **Nanette Roberts**, Licensing Inspector (Eastern).

Ready Regions



Ready Region Chesapeake Bay

What are you most looking forward to next year about your Ready Regions work?

We are excited to see our regional coalition structure taking shape, which will help to create a more integrated and coordinated approach across the footprint. This includes creating new Family Councils and local Early Childhood Partnership Councils within a full Regional Coalition. We will be working with new and existing partners to implement this shared governance model. Over the long term these more local groups and Coalition will become the connector for coordinated enrollment and family engagement efforts. Our community partners are very passionate about their work with local families, and the next step will be ensuring family representation, power sharing, equality, and family voice at ALL levels.

What are you most proud of/what have been the highlights of your RR work so far?

Last fall 99 percent of eligible VQB5 programs in our region received CLASS Observations! To achieve this, we quickly built a cadre of observers, leveraging monthly training, and adding creative incentives to expand our team. We also prioritized Family Council recruitment. The council now meets monthly to learn about components of the early childhood system, then share perspectives and personal stories. Last month, because of the relationships forming among families, a member felt comfortable asking about mental health and how to facilitate a healthy mindset for themselves and their young children. All the members agreed that was also a topic worth exploring.

What makes your Ready Region special and/or unique? What are some of the key focus areas in your region

Ready Region Chesapeake Bay represents a population of urban, suburban, and rural families from all walks of life spanning from the Northern Neck to the lower Peninsula. As we engage these diverse communities, we are using tools learned from an intensive 7-week training series call *Facilitative Leadership for Social Change*. This shared power and accountability model has given us a new mindset along with the skills we need to bring diverse groups together to create a regional vision for early childhood success that will be the cornerstone of our common agenda.

Learn more on the [Ready Regions Chesapeake Bay webpage!](#)



Reflections

A Summary of First Quarter Successes

Child Care Centers and Family Day Homes



The Office of Child Care Health and Safety (OCCHS) had a productive start to the 2023 calendar year. This past quarter, the OCCHS released updated applications for licensure and voluntary registration to streamline information collected for application purposes and to ensure that providers were aware of the [fictitious name](#) requirements of the Code of Virginia.

The OCCHS team also launched a more user-friendly [online portal](#) for providers to submit initial and renewal applications for licensure and registration, and initial and renewal filings for exemption. The [online portal](#) now allows providers to submit requests for modifications and updated documents. Utilizing the portal helps providers avoid mailing delays and ensures that documents are submitted securely to the OCCHS. A quick reference guide on using the portal can be found

on the Department's [Child Care VA website](#).

In an effort to better support multilingual child care providers serving children in home based programs, the OCCHS team was able to release a Spanish language version of the [Subsidy Program Vendor Requirements for Family Day Homes, 8VAC20-790 \(Part II\)](#), and the [Voluntary Registration of Family Day Homes: Requirements for Providers, 8VAC20-850](#). These translations are available on the Department's [Child Care VA website](#).

Virginia Preschool Initiative

In the world of education, and VPI specifically, the current school year has wrapped up and minds are now wrapped up in planning for the upcoming year. While this is the nature of our work, it's important to pause and celebrate the successes of this school year. As we shared in the last issue final enrollment was well above pre-pandemic enrollment for our four-year-old program. The three-year program has more than doubled in size since the pilot began in the 19/20 school year, giving almost 2000 students the opportunity for a two year preschool experience. Dozens of school divisions took advantage of the extended enrollment window allowing hundreds of children across the state to be funded for high quality PreK experience's. The Community Provider program is expanding in localities across the state, giving families more options to meet their diverse needs. We are excited to see how all programs continue to expand in the next school year!



Early Childhood Special Education

The number of preschool aged children served in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) grew significantly this school year. Prior to the pandemic, the rate of growth for children ages 2-5 with IEPs was three percent annually. There was a 20% drop in the December 1, 2021 data reflecting a strong impact of the pandemic on child find efforts. This year, the December 1, 2022 draft data reflected a 16% growth over last. This significant growth is likely due to a return to normalcy in most programs and settings, thus; a return to parents, doctors, early intervention, and child care providers making referrals. Additionally, it is likely that the pandemic itself impacted development as the closure of schools, child care centers and playgrounds cut kids off from educational, recreational and social activities, impacting development and limiting learning opportunities.

Head Start

As Spring approaches, Head Start programs across the Commonwealth are busily closing out activities for the current program year and deeply immersed in planning for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year. In reflection, recipient agencies were impacted by the pandemic in many ways, and over 50% have fully rebounded towards their total funded enrollment numbers. To support these enrollment efforts, the Head Start State Collaboration Office Director toured many recipient agencies to see firsthand the multi-generational, comprehensive services provided to families. Additionally, funding levels were increased by the Biden Administration which included a 5.6% cost of living adjustment and quality improvement dollars proportionate to funded enrollment.



Looking ahead, the Division of Early Childhood Care and Education will continue to partner with Virginia Head Start programs as they coordinate preschool efforts and shape the lives of our most vulnerable children and families.

VQB5



After completing over 9,000 CLASS observations and entering information about curriculum use in the fall, programs participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2 are using their classroom level results to target areas for improvement as they prepare for and complete their spring CLASS observations. In total, Virginia expects over 18,000 CLASS observations to be completed as part of Practice Year 2 – that's a lot of feedback for program leaders and teachers!

In mid-March, VDOE received an endorsement from the [Early Childhood Advisory Committee](#) (ECAC) on the proposed 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines. These guidelines will be presented to the Board of Education in April for first review and then again in June. The updated guidelines build on the success of the practice years and provide expanded information about VQB5 requirements. The VDOE is hosting two webinars to review the guidelines, you can find the recording for webinar 1 [here](#), and register for webinar 2 (on April 21st) [here](#).

As a reminder, beginning in August 2023, all publicly-funded programs that serve children ages birth to five are required by state law to participate in VQB5.

- View 2023-2024 VQB5 Participation Requirements in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)).
- For more information about supports to prepare for VQB5 2023-2024, please contact your local [Ready Region](#).

Early Learning Support

Spring is here! This quarter the Office of Early Childhood Learning has worked in collaboration with our partners to prepare you for the Spring assessments, future VQB5 planning, and available [ELDS](#) aligned resources.

Representatives from VKRP and VLP hosted a [“Preparing for Spring Assessment” Webinar](#) to prepare providers for Spring administration of assessments ([slides](#), [padlet](#)). Please [complete this survey](#) to inform future engagement events related to assessment by April 21, 2023.

The [Curriculum “Get to Know You” Lunch & Learn series](#) is underway where providers are hearing directly from [Virginia's approved vendors](#) about curriculum choices. Sessions continue through the Spring with special dates for Family Day Home Providers and Spanish Speaking Providers. You can explore more information about curriculum choice and VQB5 by watching the [VQB5 Curriculum Options and Access Webinar](#).

Early Learning Support (Cont...)

For more information about Early Learning Supports in Virginia, please review the March [ELDS Aligned Resources Pre-Recorded Webinar](#), where Marie LaMonica-Sarro, Project Manager from the Office of Early Childhood Learning reviews available supports and ways to access them including: [multilingual supports from WIDA](#), [ECMHC](#), the [ELDS Micro-credential](#), and more!

Your engagement and feedback is important to us – please [let us know](#) about additional ways Virginia can support your understanding and use of ELDS aligned resources and tools by **April 28th**.

Focus On Wellness

Intentionally fueling your body is great for your physical and mental health! And even though we have come to the close of National Nutrition Month, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' efforts to support us in making healthy and low-stress food choices do not end! The [Smart Tips for Successful Meals](#) resource gives ideas for meals, substitutions, and staple tools to have in your home to make healthy eating easier. Smart nutrition also means hydration! Explore [Revyourbev.com](#) for activity ideas to engage your students (and you!) to drink more water.

Did you know [a healthier gut can boost your mood](#)? According to John's Hopkins University "big changes in the gut may send signals to the brain that trigger mood changes!" We hope you can use these resources to explore delicious food, hydrate, and be well with your loved ones and the children and families within your programs.





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